

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of facilitating the provision of services to individuals, said method comprising the steps of
 - (a) establishing a services facilitator;
 - (b) establishing a first information-sharing relationship between said services
5 facilitator and an organization having a plurality of members, wherein at least some of said plurality of members need certain services;
 - (c) establishing a second information-sharing relationship between said services facilitator and at least one services provider that provides said certain services;
 - (d) fielding at least one inquiry from at least one member of said plurality of
members; and
 - (e) referring said at least one member to said at least one services provider based upon said at least one inquiry.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said services facilitator is an entity separate from said organization and from said at least one services provider.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said organization is one of a health plan and a corporation.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said certain services comprise health services.
5. The method of any one of claims 1, 3, and 4, wherein said step (b) further comprises
 - establishing a discounted prices program for said certain services; and
 - offering said discounted prices program to said organization in exchange for access to
5 contact information for said plurality of members.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein said step (b) further comprises offering said discounted prices program to said organization with no monthly premium or access fees.
7. The method of any one of claims 1, 3, and 4, wherein said step (b) further comprises providing at least one of the following services to said organization in exchange

for access to contact information for said plurality of members: marketing, administration, and pre-screening.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said step (c) further comprises providing at least one of the following services to said at least one services provider in exchange for an agreement from said services provider to provide said certain services at discounted prices: marketing, administration, and pre-screening.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said method further comprises the step of marketing said certain services to said plurality of members.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein said marketing step further comprises said organization endorsing said certain services offered by said at least one services provider.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one services provider is at least one of a laser care provider and an optical store.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said method further comprises said services facilitator administering a communication system that links said services facilitator to said at least one services provider and to said at least one member.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said communication system comprises
a first communication system that links said services facilitator to said at least one services provider; and
a second communication system that links said services facilitator to said at least one member; and wherein said administering step further comprises said services facilitator
operating said first communication system;
operating said second communication system;
monitoring said second communication system for said at least one inquiry from said at least one member;
fielding said at least one inquiry from said at least one member; and
directing said at least one member to said at least one services provider based upon said at least one fielded inquiry.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said first communication system is different from said second communication system.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein said operating said second communication system step further comprises establishing an in-house telephonic communications center capable of receiving at least one of telephone calls and facsimile transmissions from said plurality of members.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein said operating said second communication system step further comprises establishing a cooperative relationship with at least one overflow telephonic communications center capable of receiving at least one of telephone calls and facsimile transmissions from said plurality of members.

17. The method of any one of claims 15 and 16, wherein said operating said second communication system step further comprises
assigning a unique telephonic communications number to said organization; and
announcing said unique telephonic communications number to said plurality of members.

18. A method of facilitating the provision of health services to individuals, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) establishing a health services facilitator;
- (b) establishing a first information-sharing relationship between said health services facilitator and an organization having a plurality of members, wherein at least some of said plurality of members need certain health services;
- (c) establishing a second information-sharing relationship between said health services facilitator and at least one health services provider that provides said certain health services;
- (d) fielding at least one inquiry from at least one member of said plurality of members;
- (e) referring said at least one member to said at least one health services provider based upon said at least one inquiry; and
- (f) administering a Web-based system that links said health services facilitator to said at least one health services provider.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said Web-based system enables said health services facilitator to do at least one of the following tasks: fielding said at least one inquiry

from said at least one member, scheduling an appointment for said at least one member, and tracking outcomes of said certain health services provided to said at least one member.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein said Web-based system further links said health services facilitator to said plurality of members in real time.

21. The method of claim 18, wherein said Web-based system further links said health services facilitator to said at least one health services provider in real time.

22. The method of claim 18, wherein said administering step further comprises operating an in-house call center capable of receiving telephonic communications from said plurality of members.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein said administering step further comprises establishing a cooperative relationship with at least one overflow call center capable of receiving telephonic communications from said plurality of members.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said Web-based system further links said health services facilitator to said in-house call center and to said at least one overflow call center in real time.

25. The method of claim 18, wherein said certain health services comprise performing laser vision correction, and wherein said at least one health services provider is a laser care provider.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said laser care provider is at least one of a laser vision correction center and an independent refractive surgeon.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein said communication system further comprises a customer service center capable of receiving telephonic communications from said plurality of members; wherein said Web-based system links said health services facilitator to said customer service center; and wherein said administering step further comprises operating said customer service center.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein said customer service center is at least one of an in-house call center and an overflow call center.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein said Web-based system enables one of said customer service center and said health services provider to do at least one of the following tasks: fielding questions from said plurality of members, pre-screening said plurality of members, and scheduling appointments.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein said Web-based system enables one of said customer service center and said health services provider to track outcomes from laser vision correction procedures.

31. The method of claim 25, wherein said step (c) further comprises providing at least one of the following services to said laser care provider in exchange for an agreement from said laser care provider to perform laser vision correction at discounted prices: marketing, administration, and pre-screening.

32. The method of claim 25, wherein said step (c) further comprises said health services facilitator providing the following services to said laser care provider in exchange for an agreement from said laser care provider to perform laser vision correction at discounted prices:

generating marketing materials for a laser vision correction program;

distributing said marketing materials to said plurality of members;

receiving real-time available-appointment information from said laser care provider via said Web-based system;

pre-screening said at least one of member to determine that said at least one member is a potential customer for said certain health services;

collecting information about said at least one member;

receiving a deposit from said at least one member for said laser vision correction; and

scheduling a screening examination for said at least one member directly with said laser care provider via said Web-based system based upon said real-time available-appointment information.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein said step (c) comprises said health services facilitator educating said plurality of members on laser vision correction in further exchange for said agreement from said laser care provider to perform laser vision correction at discounted prices.

34. The method of claim 32, wherein said step (c) comprises said health services facilitator providing the following further services to said laser care provider in exchange for said agreement from said laser care provider to perform laser vision correction at discounted prices:

5 tracking completed laser vision correction procedures, cancellations, reasons for cancellations, surgical outcomes, and statistical data;
creating utilization reports based upon said tracking; and
screening for medical conditions that may affect stability of laser vision correction.

35. The method of claim 32, wherein said collecting information about said at least one member step further comprises pre-screening said at least one member for medical conditions that may affect suitability of said at least one member for laser vision correction.

36. The method of claim 32, wherein said marketing materials offer an enhancement warranty comprising discounted follow-up procedures assuming said at least one member has annual eye exams with a participating eye care provider.

37. The method of claim 25, wherein said laser vision correction is performed according to a laser vision correction program, wherein said laser vision correction program comprises the following steps:

said health services facilitator establishing a discounted prices program with said laser
5 care provider;

said health services facilitator offering said discounted prices program to said organization in exchange for access to contact information for said plurality of members;

said health services facilitator generating marketing materials for said discounted prices program;

10 said health services facilitator distributing said marketing materials to said plurality of members;

said laser care provider furnishing available-appointment information to said health services facilitator via said Web-based system in real time;

15 said health services facilitator receiving said available-appointment information in real time;

said health services facilitator pre-screening said at least one member to determine that said at least one member is a potential customer for said laser vision correction;

said health services facilitator collecting information about said at least one member;

said health services facilitator receiving a deposit from said at least one member for
said laser vision correction;

said health services facilitator scheduling a screening examination for said at least one
member directly with said laser care provider via said Web-based system based upon said
real-time available-appointment information; and

said laser care provider performing said screening examination.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein said laser vision correction program further
comprises the following steps:

said laser care provider determining from said screening examination that said at least
one member is ineligible for laser vision correction;

said laser care provider entering ineligibility information into said Web-based system;
and

said health services facilitator refunding said deposit to said at least one member.

39. The method of claim 37, wherein said laser vision correction program further
comprises the following steps:

said laser care provider determining from said screening examination that said one
member is eligible for laser vision correction;

said laser care provider entering eligibility information and surgical data into said
Web-based system;

said laser care provider collecting a balance due for said laser vision correction; and
said laser care provider performing said laser vision correction.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein said laser vision correction program further
comprises the following steps:

said laser care provider entering post-correction data into said Web-based system; and

said laser care provider entering follow-up, post-correction data into said Web-based
system.

41. The method of claim 39, wherein said laser care provider enters said follow-up,
post-correction data into said Web-based system at predetermined intervals.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein said predetermined intervals include within one month of said laser vision correction, within three months of said laser vision correction, and within six months of said laser vision correction.

43. The method of any one of claims 37 and 39, wherein said laser vision correction program further comprises the following steps:

said health services facilitator offering an enhancement warranty; and
said laser care provider honoring said enhancement warranty.

44. The method of claim 43, wherein said enhancement warranty comprises discounted follow-up procedures for said at least one member assuming said at least one member has an annual eye exam with a participating eye care provider.

45. A method of receiving and processing information in real time over a network, said method comprising the steps of

establishing a site on a global communication network;
providing a central server connected to said site on said global communication network, said central server accessing a dynamic database;
recognizing an active scheduler;
prompting said active scheduler with information stored by said central server to collect information for a plurality of fields within said dynamic database;
receiving said collected information from said active scheduler;
processing said collected information by said central server; and
updating said dynamic database to reflect said collected information prior to recognizing a second active scheduler.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein said active scheduler is at least one of a call center, a clinic, and an administrator.

47. The method of claim 45, wherein said prompting said active scheduler step further comprises presenting scripted statements to said active scheduler, said scripted statements being stored by said central server and transferred from said central server over said global communication network to said active scheduler.

48. A method of scheduling appointments and compiling statistical data in real-time over a network, said method comprising the steps of

establishing a site on a global communication network;
providing a central server connected to said global communication network, said
5 central server having a dynamic database;
recognizing at least one of a call center, a clinic, and an administrator as an active
scheduler;
prompting said active scheduler to collect information for a plurality of fields within
said dynamic database;
10 receiving collected information from said active scheduler;
storing said collected information;
updating said dynamic database to reflect said collected information prior to
recognizing a second active scheduler;
scheduling appointments in real time based upon said collected information and
making details concerning said scheduled appointments selectively available over said global
communication network; and
compiling statistical data in real time based upon said collected information and
making details concerning said compiled statistical data selectively available over said global
communication network.

49. A system for linking a plurality of health services providers, a health services
facilitator, and a plurality of members to provide real-time scheduling of appointments, to
pre-qualify members for specific services, and to compile statistical tracking data over a
network, said system comprising

5 a central server having a predetermined set of prompts and being capable of storing
scheduling information, pre-qualifying information, and statistical tracking data pertaining to
said plurality of health services providers, said health services facilitator, and said plurality of
members in a database;

a communication link allowing transfer of said scheduling information, pre-qualifying
10 information, and statistical tracking data between at least one of said plurality of members
and at least one of said health services facilitator and said plurality of health services
providers; and

at least one remote communication terminal connected to said central server through a
global computer network on which said plurality of health services providers and said health
15 services facilitator receive said predetermined set of prompts from said central server and
enter said pre-qualifying information, said scheduling information, and said statistical

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tracking data obtained from said at least one of said plurality of members through said communication link or independently entered by said plurality of health services providers and said health services facilitator in response to said predetermined set of prompts.